

**Comments of  
Fairfax Citizens for Responsible Growth, Inc.  
On the  
Tysons Corner Draft Guiding Planning Principles**

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Fairfax Citizens for Responsible Growth, Inc. (FairGrowth) respectfully submits the following comments regarding the Draft Guiding Planning Principles as posted at <http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/dpz/tysonscorner/nofind/adptplanprinciples.pdf>

**I. There Should Be Greater Emphasis on Community Involvement Throughout The Process**

The intense and frequent involvement of the community is a hallmark of good public policy in general, and of true Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) principles in particular.

Accordingly, the first draft principle should be re-written as follows:

- *Through consultation with the surrounding communities, propel Tysons Corner forward within existing boundaries as the employment and commercial center of the region and an expanding contributor to the tax base of Fairfax County.*

And in the second draft principle, the words "at the edges" should be struck, and language added, so that it reads:

- *Retain compatible transitions to adjacent neighborhoods in terms of some combination of use, intensity, scale and building heights. New planning language for specific sites should be crafted to conform to the community vision for the area.*

Currently, the community is asked to comment on specific proposals. Instead, the community should first outline its vision for an area, and proposals should then be presented and considered in that context.

As FairGrowth has noted previously in other discussions, the importance of working with surrounding communities is supported by TOD literature. Specifically, *The New Transit Town: Best Practices In Transit-Oriented Development*,<sup>1</sup> states that a successful plan will "balance[] the need for sufficient density to support convenient transit service **with the scale of the adjacent community**."<sup>2</sup> This influential book also observes that a community's blessing can bring success to projects that otherwise might fail, while lingering suspicion and hostility are lead weights that can drag down projects that otherwise might have succeeded.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Hank Dittmar with Dena Belzer and Gerald Aulter, Island Press 2004.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 4 (emphasis added).

<sup>3</sup> *Id.*, pp. 53 - 54.

The Urban Land Institute also tells us that in order to succeed, a proposal must be "stakeholder centered" as well as "collaborative and educational."<sup>4</sup> An Institute commentary further notes that TOD is "a process, a dialogue, a way to build consensus; it does not hand down preconceived notions or plans for development;" and that community stakeholders should "design their own future."<sup>5</sup>

These sentiments are echoed by our own Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments, which lists "Encourag[ing] Community and Stakeholder Collaboration" as one of the principles of Smart Growth.<sup>6</sup>

The United States Environmental Protection Agency remarks:

"'Encouraging Community and Stakeholder Collaboration in Development Decisions' means ensuring the early and frequent involvement of all stakeholders throughout the planning and development decision-making process. The means of engaging the community and stakeholders are myriad and range from early stakeholder input in community plans to ongoing feedback and evaluation of plan implementation as projects are constructed. Ensuring a high level of public involvement is fundamental to guaranteeing that community needs are fully integrated into the planning and development process, as well as contributing to avoidance or creative resolution of development conflicts."<sup>7</sup>

For these reasons, FairGrowth suggests the changes outlined above.

## **II. Higher Density Should Be Contingent Upon The Availability of Adequate Public Facilities**

The Virginia Chapter of the Sierra Club stipulates that approval of plans "should be contingent upon the availability of adequate public facilities."<sup>8</sup> FairGrowth agrees, and notes that while the Commonwealth of Virginia may limit the ability of localities to consider such factors in the zoning phase, localities are able to factor in public facilities during the earlier planning phase.

During the planning phase, public facilities should include a wide array of factors, including but not limited to police, fire and other emergency services; schools, including

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<sup>4</sup> *10 Principles for Successful Development Around Transit*, p. 3 -

[http://www.uli.org/AM/Template.cfm?Section=Search&section=Policy\\_Papers2&template=/CM/ContentDisplay.cfm&ContentFileID=14592](http://www.uli.org/AM/Template.cfm?Section=Search&section=Policy_Papers2&template=/CM/ContentDisplay.cfm&ContentFileID=14592)

<sup>5</sup> Bill Hudnut, Urban Land Institute commentary, *What is Smart Growth Not?* -

<http://www.uli.org/AM/Template.cfm?Section=Search&template=/CM/HTMLDisplay.cfm&ContentID=20535>

<sup>6</sup> *Smart Growth Begins at the Local Level*, p. 7 -

[http://www.mwcog.org/planning/planning/smartgrowth/downloads/Smart%20Growth%20Implementation%20Kit\\_FINAL.pdf](http://www.mwcog.org/planning/planning/smartgrowth/downloads/Smart%20Growth%20Implementation%20Kit_FINAL.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> EPA's *Smart Growth Glossary* at <http://cfpub.epa.gov/sgpdb/glossary.cfm?type=topic#11>

<sup>8</sup> *Environmental Issue: Sprawl/Smart Growth*, <http://virginia.sierraclub.org/growth.html>

core facilities such as cafeterias, libraries and gymnasiums; recreational centers and areas, including public athletic fields, swimming pools, parks, trails, and open space; local and major road networks; and public transit.

For these reasons, FairGrowth suggests that the sixth proposed principle be altered to read as follows:

- *While maintaining a balance with available public infrastructure of all types, attract measured mixed-use development and private investment to Metrorail station areas and transit locations in Tysons Corner, including a range of housing choices and price points, service opportunities, recreational opportunities, and office space.*

### **III. The Need to Coordinate Usages Among Transit Nodes and Maintain Balance With Available Public Facilities Should Be Explicitly Recognized**

The Brookings Institution suggests the concept of "transit node coordination;" *i.e.*, that planning occur "at the systemwide scale, assessing opportunities at each station site and thinking regionally about the interplay between land uses around each station..."<sup>9</sup>

Therefore, FairGrowth respectfully suggests referencing transit node coordination with the following additional planning principle:

- *Transit node sites will be coordinated with each other, and balanced with available public facilities, in order to optimize the mixture of retail, residential, commercial, recreational and parking uses collectively and at each site.*

FairGrowth thanks the Tysons Land Use Task Force for this opportunity to provide comments.

Respectfully submitted,

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<sup>9</sup> *Transit Oriented Development: Moving From Rhetoric to Reality*, p. 32 - <http://www.brookings.edu/es/urban/publications/belzertod.pdf>